SOME POEMS BY SIR WALTER SCOTT

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INTRODUCTION.

Since there is room in this volume for more verses than Colonel Hay's {1}, I have added to them a few poems by Sir Walter Scott; the first

written in 1811 at the time of the struggle with Napoleon in the Peninsula, the second in 1815, after Waterloo. Thus there is over all this volume a thin haze of battle through which we see only the finer feelings and the nobler hopes of man. The day is to come when war shall be no more, but wars have been and may again be necessary to bring on that day; and it is of such war, not untinged with the light of heaven, that we have passing shadows in this little book.

"The Vision of Don Roderick; a Poem, by Walter Scott, Esq.," was printed at Edinburgh by James Ballantyne & Co. in 1811. They are the present representatives of that firm by whom it is here reprinted. It was originally inscribed "to John Whitmore, Esq., and to the Committee of Subscribers for relief of the Portuguese Sufferers, in which he presides," as a "poem composed for the benefit of the Fund under their management."

The Legend of Don Roderick will be given in the next volume of our "Companion Poets," for Robert Southey founded upon it a Romantic Tale in Verse, which is one of the best tales of the kind in the English language. Southey's tale of Roderick himself was written at the same time when Walter Savage Landor was writing a play upon the subject, and Scott was, in the piece here reprinted, making it the starting-point of a vision of the war in the Peninsula. The fatal palace of Don Roderick may have been a fable connected with the ruins of a Roman amphitheatre. The fable, as translated by Scott from a Spanish History of King Roderick, was this:-

"One mile on the east side of the city of Toledo, among some rocks, was situated an ancient Tower of magnificent structure, though much dilapidated by time, which consumes all: four estadoes (*i.e.*, four times a man's height) below it, there was a Cave with a very narrow entrance, and a gate cut out of the solid rock, lined with a strong covering of iron, and fastened with many locks; above the gate some Greek letters are engraved, which, although abbreviated, and of doubtful meaning, were thus interpreted, according to the exposition of learned men:- *The King who opens this cave and discovers the wonders will discover both good and evil things*. Many kings desired to know the mystery of this Tower, and sought to find out the manner with much care; but when they opened the gate, such a tremendous noise arose in the Cave that it appeared as if the earth

was bursting; many of those present sickened with fear, and others lost their lives. In order to prevent such great perils (as they supposed a dangerous enchantment was contained within), they secured the gate with new locks, concluding, that though a king was destined to open it, the fated time was not yet arrived. At last King Don Rodrigo, led on by his evil fortune and unlucky destiny, opened the Tower; and some bold attendants whom he had brought with him entered, although agitated with fear. Having proceeded a good way, they fled back to the entrance, terrified with a frightful vision which they had beheld. The King was greatly moved, and ordered many torches, so contrived that the tempest in the cave could not extinguish them, to be lighted. Then the King entered, not without fear, before all the others. He discovered, by degrees, a splendid hall, apparently built in a very sumptuous manner; in the middle stood a Bronze Statue of very ferocious appearance, which held a battle-axe in its hands. With this he struck the floor violently, giving it such heavy blows that the noise in the Cave was occasioned by the motion of the air. The King, greatly affrighted and astonished, began to conjure this terrible vision, promising that he would return without doing any injury in the Cave, after he had obtained sight of what was contained in it. The Statue ceased to strike the floor, and the King, with his followers, somewhat assured, and recovering their courage, proceeded into the hall; and on the left of the Statue they found this inscription on the wall: *Unfortunate King, thou hast entered here in an evil hour*. On the right side of the wall the words were inscribed: *By strange Nations thou shalt be dispossessed, and thy subjects foully degraded*. On the shoulders of the Statue other words were written, which said, *I call upon the Arabs*. And upon his heart was written, *I do my office*. At the entrance of the hall there was placed a round bowl, from which a great noise, like the fall of waters, proceeded. They found no other thing in the hall, - and when the King, sorrowful and greatly affected, had scarcely turned about to leave the Cavern, the Statue again commenced its accustomed blows upon the floor. After they had mutually promised to conceal what they had seen, they again closed the Tower, and blocked up the gate of the Cavern with earth, that no memory might remain in the world of such a portentous and evil-boding prodigy. The ensuing midnight, they heard great cries and clamour from the Cave, resounding like the noise of Battle, and the ground shaking with a tremendous roar; the whole edifice of the old Tower fell to the ground, by

which they were greatly affrighted, the Vision which they had beheld appearing to them as a dream.”

Scott’s poem on the Field of Waterloo was written to assist the Waterloo subscription.

H. M.

“Quid dignum memorare tuis, Hispania, terris,
Vox humana valet!” - CLAUDIAN.

THE VISION OF DON RODERICK.

PREFACE

The following Poem is founded upon a Spanish Tradition, bearing, in general, that Don Roderick, the last Gothic King of Spain, when the invasion of the Moors was depending, had the temerity to descend into an ancient vault, near Toledo, the opening of which had been denounced as fatal to the Spanish Monarchy. The legend adds, that his rash curiosity was mortified by an emblematical representation of those Saracens who, in the year 714, defeated him in battle, and reduced Spain under their dominion. I have presumed to prolong the Vision of the Revolutions of Spain down to the present eventful crisis of the Peninsula, and to divide it, by a supposed change of scene, into, THREE PERIODS. The FIRST of these represents the Invasion of the Moors, the Defeat and Death of Roderick, and closes with the peaceful occupation of the country by the victors. The SECOND PERIOD embraces the state of the Peninsula when the conquests of the Spaniards and Portuguese in the East and West Indies had raised to the highest pitch the renown of their arms; sullied, however, by superstition and cruelty. An allusion to the inhumanities of the Inquisition terminates this picture. The LAST PART of the Poem opens with the state of Spain previous to the unparalleled treachery of BUONAPARTE, gives a sketch of the usurpation attempted upon that unsuspicious and friendly kingdom, and terminates with the arrival of the British succours. It may be further proper to mention, that the object of the Poem is less to commemorate or detail particular incidents, than to exhibit a general and impressive picture of the several periods brought upon the stage.

EDINBURGH, *June* 24, 1811.

INTRODUCTION.

I.
Lives there a strain, whose sounds of mounting fire
May rise distinguished o’er the din of war;
Or died it with yon Master of the Lyre
Who sung beleaguered Ilion’s evil star?
Such, WELLINGTON, might reach thee from afar,
Wafting its descant wide o’er Ocean’s range;
Nor shouts, nor clashing arms, its mood could mar,
All, as it swelled ’twixt each loud trumpet-change,
That clangs to Britain victory, to Portugal revenge!

II.
Yes! such a strain, with all o’er-pouring measure,
Might melodise with each tumultuous sound
Each voice of fear or triumph, woe or pleasure,
That rings Mondego’s ravaged shores around;
The thundering cry of hosts with conquest crowned,
The female shriek, the ruined peasant’s moan,
The shout of captives from their chains unbound,
The foiled oppressor’s deep and sullen groan,
A Nation’s choral hymn, for tyranny o’erthrown.

III.
But we, weak minstrels of a laggard day
Skilled but to imitate an elder page,
Timid and raptureless, can we repay
The debt thou claim’st in this exhausted age?
Thou givest our lyres a theme, that might engage
Those that could send thy name o’er sea and land,

While sea and land shall last; for Homer’s rage
A theme; a theme for Milton’s mighty hand -
How much unmeet for us, a faint degenerate band!

IV.

Ye mountains stern! within whose rugged breast
The friends of Scottish freedom found repose;
Ye torrents! whose hoarse sounds have soothed their rest,
Returning from the field of vanquished foes;
Say, have ye lost each wild majestic close
That erst the choir of Bards or Druids flung,
What time their hymn of victory arose,
And Cattraeth’s glens with voice of triumph rung,
And mystic Merlin harped, and grey-haired Llywarch sung?

V.

Oh! if your wilds such minstrelsy retain,
As sure your changeful gales seem oft to say,
When sweeping wild and sinking soft again,
Like trumpet-jubilee, or harp’s wild sway;
If ye can echo such triumphant lay,
Then lend the note to him has loved you long!
Who pious gathered each tradition grey
That floats your solitary wastes along,
And with affection vain gave them new voice in song.

VI.

For not till now, how oft soe’er the task
Of truant verse hath lightened graver care,
From Muse or Sylvan was he wont to ask,
In phrase poetic, inspiration fair;
Careless he gave his numbers to the air,
They came unsought for, if applauses came:
Nor for himself prefers he now the prayer;
Let but his verse befit a hero’s fame,
Immortal be the verse! - forgot the poet’s name!

VII.

Hark, from yon misty cairn their answer tost:
“Minstrel! the fame of whose romantic lyre,
Capricious-swelling now, may soon be lost,
Like the light flickering of a cottage fire;
If to such task presumptuous thou aspire,
Seek not from us the meed to warrior due:
Age after age has gathered son to sire
Since our grey cliffs the din of conflict knew,
Or, pealing through our vales, victorious bugles blew.

VIII.

“Decayed our old traditionary lore,
Save where the lingering fays renew their ring,
By milkmaid seen beneath the hawthorn hoar,
Or round the marge of Minchmore’s haunted spring;
Save where their legends grey-haired shepherds sing,
That now scarce win a listening ear but thine,
Of feuds obscure, and Border ravaging,
And rugged deeds recount in rugged line,
Of moonlight foray made on Teviot, Tweed, or Tyne.

IX.

“No! search romantic lands, where the near Sun
Gives with unstinted boon ethereal flame,
Where the rude villager, his labour done,
In verse spontaneous chants some favoured name,
Whether Olalia’s charms his tribute claim,
Her eye of diamond, and her locks of jet;
Or whether, kindling at the deeds of Græme,
He sing, to wild Morisco measure set,
Old Albin’s red claymore, green Erin’s bayonet!

X.

“Explore those regions, where the flinty crest
Of wild Nevada ever gleams with snows,
Where in the proud Alhambra’s ruined breast

Barbaric monuments of pomp repose;
Or where the banners of more ruthless foes
Than the fierce Moor, float o’er Toledo’s fane,
From whose tall towers even now the patriot throws
An anxious glance, to spy upon the plain
The blended ranks of England, Portugal, and Spain.

XI.

“There, of Numantian fire a swarthy spark
Still lightens in the sunburnt native’s eye;
The stately port, slow step, and visage dark,
Still mark enduring pride and constancy.
And, if the glow of feudal chivalry
Beam not, as once, thy nobles’ dearest pride,
Iberia! oft thy crestless peasantry
Have seen the plumed Hidalgo quit their side,
Have seen, yet dauntless stood - ’gainst fortune fought and died.

XII.

“And cherished still by that unchanging race,
Are themes for minstrelsy more high than thine;
Of strange tradition many a mystic trace,
Legend and vision, prophecy and sign;
Where wonders wild of Arabesque combine
With Gothic imagery of darker shade,
Forming a model meet for minstrel line.
Go, seek such theme!” - the Mountain Spirit said.
With filial awe I heard - I heard, and I obeyed.

THE VISION OF DON RODERICK.

I.
Rearing their crests amid the cloudless skies,
And darkly clustering in the pale moonlight,
Toledo’s holy towers and spires arise,
As from a trembling lake of silver white.
Their mingled shadows intercept the sight
Of the broad burial-ground outstretched below,
And nought disturbs the silence of the night;
All sleeps in sullen shade, or silver glow,
All save the heavy swell of Teio’s ceaseless flow.

II.
All save the rushing swell of Teio’s tide,
Or, distant heard, a courser’s neigh or tramp;
Their changing rounds as watchful horsemen ride,
To guard the limits of King Roderick’s camp.
For through the river’s night-fog rolling damp
Was many a proud pavilion dimly seen,
Which glimmered back, against the moon’s fair lamp,
Tissues of silk and silver twisted sheen,
And standards proudly pitched, and warders armed between.

III.
But of their Monarch’s person keeping ward,
Since last the deep-mouthed bell of vespers tolled,
The chosen soldiers of the royal guard
The post beneath the proud Cathedral hold:
A band unlike their Gothic sires of old,
Who, for the cap of steel and iron mace,
Bear slender darts, and casques bedecked with gold,
While silver-studded belts their shoulders grace,
Where ivory quivers ring in the broad falchion’s place.

IV.
In the light language of an idle court,
They murmured at their master’s long delay,
And held his lengthened orisons in sport:-

“What! will Don Roderick here till morning stay,
To wear in shrift and prayer the night away?
And are his hours in such dull penance past,
For fair Florinda’s plundered charms to pay?”
Then to the east their weary eyes they cast,
And wished the lingering dawn would glimmer forth at last.

V.

But, far within, Toledo’s Prelate lent
An ear of fearful wonder to the King;
The silver lamp a fitful lustre sent,
So long that sad confession witnessing:
For Roderick told of many a hidden thing,
Such as are lothly uttered to the air,
When Fear, Remorse, and Shame the bosom wring,
And Guilt his secret burden cannot bear,
And Conscience seeks in speech a respite from Despair.

VI.

Full on the Prelate’s face, and silver hair,
The stream of failing light was feebly rolled:
But Roderick’s visage, though his head was bare,
Was shadowed by his hand and mantle’s fold.
While of his hidden soul the sins he told,
Proud Alaric’s descendant could not brook,
That mortal man his bearing should behold,
Or boast that he had seen, when Conscience shook,
Fear tame a monarch’s brow, Remorse a warrior’s look.

VII.

The old man’s faded cheek waxed yet more pale,
As many a secret sad the King bewrayed;
As sign and glance eked out the unfinished tale,
When in the midst his faltering whisper stayed.
“Thus royal Witiza was slain,” - he said;
“Yet, holy Father, deem not it was I.”
Thus still Ambition strives her crimes to shade. -

“Oh, rather deem ’twas stern necessity!
Self-preservation bade, and I must kill or die.

VIII.
“And if Florinda’s shrieks alarmed the air,
If she invoked her absent sire in vain,
And on her knees implored that I would spare,
Yet, reverend Priest, thy sentence rash refrain!
All is not as it seems - the female train
Know by their bearing to disguise their mood:”
But Conscience here, as if in high disdain,
Sent to the Monarch’s cheek the burning blood -
He stayed his speech abrupt - and up the Prelate stood.

IX.
“O hardened offspring of an iron race!
What of thy crimes, Don Roderick, shall I say?
What alms, or prayers, or penance can efface
Murder’s dark spot, wash treason’s stain away!
For the foul ravisher how shall I pray,
Who, scarce repentant, makes his crime his boast?
How hope Almighty vengeance shall delay,
Unless, in mercy to yon Christian host,
He spare the shepherd, lest the guiltless sheep be lost?”

X.
Then kindled the dark tyrant in his mood,
And to his brow returned its dauntless gloom;
“And welcome then,” he cried, “be blood for blood,
For treason treachery, for dishonour doom!
Yet will I know whence come they, or by whom.
Show, for thou canst - give forth the fated key,
And guide me, Priest, to that mysterious room,
Where, if aught true in old tradition be,
His nation’s future fates a Spanish King shall see.”

XI.
“Ill-fated Prince! recall the desperate word,

Or pause ere yet the omen thou obey!
Bethink, yon spell-bound portal would afford
Never to former Monarch entrance-way;
Nor shall it ever ope, old records say,
Save to a King, the last of all his line,
What time his empire totters to decay,
And treason digs, beneath, her fatal mine,
And, high above, impends avenging wrath divine.” -

XII.

“Prelate! a Monarch’s fate brooks no delay;
Lead on!” - The ponderous key the old man took,
And held the winking lamp, and led the way,
By winding stair, dark aisle, and secret nook,
Then on an ancient gateway bent his look;
And, as the key the desperate King essayed,
Low muttered thunders the Cathedral shook,
And twice he stopped, and twice new effort made,
Till the huge bolts rolled back, and the loud hinges brayed.

XIII.

Long, large, and lofty was that vaulted hall;
Roof, walls, and floor were all of marble stone,
Of polished marble, black as funeral pall,
Carved o’er with signs and characters unknown.
A paly light, as of the dawning, shone
Through the sad bounds, but whence they could not spy;
For window to the upper air was none;
Yet, by that light, Don Roderick could descry
Wonders that ne’er till then were seen by mortal eye.

XIV.

Grim sentinels, against the upper wall,
Of molten bronze, two Statues held their place;
Massive their naked limbs, their stature tall,
Their frowning foreheads golden circles grace.
Moulded they seemed for kings of giant race,

That lived and sinned before the avenging flood;
This grasped a scythe, that rested on a mace;
This spread his wings for flight, that pondering stood,
Each stubborn seemed and stern, immutable of mood.

XV.

Fixed was the right-hand Giant's brazen look
Upon his brother's glass of shifting sand,
As if its ebb he measured by a book,
Whose iron volume loaded his huge hand;
In which was wrote of many a fallen land
Of empires lost, and kings to exile driven:
And o'er that pair their names in scroll expand -
"Lo, DESTINY and TIME! to whom by Heaven
The guidance of the earth is for a season given." -

XVI.

Even while they read, the sand-glass wastes away;
And, as the last and lagging grains did creep,
That right-hand Giant 'gan his club upsway,
As one that startles from a heavy sleep.
Full on the upper wall the mace's sweep
At once descended with the force of thunder,
And hurtling down at once, in crumbled heap,
The marble boundary was rent asunder,
And gave to Roderick's view new sights of fear and wonder.

XVII.

For they might spy, beyond that mighty breach,
Realms as of Spain in visioned prospect laid,
Castles and towers, in due proportion each,
As by some skilful artist's hand portrayed:
Here, crossed by many a wild Sierra's shade,
And boundless plains that tire the traveller's eye;
There, rich with vineyard and with olive glade,
Or deep-embrowned by forests huge and high,
Or washed by mighty streams, that slowly murmured by.

XVIII.

And here, as erst upon the antique stage
Passed forth the band of masquers trimly led,
In various forms, and various equipage,
While fitting strains the hearer's fancy fed;
So, to sad Roderick's eye in order spread,
Successive pageants filled that mystic scene,
Showing the fate of battles ere they bled,
And issue of events that had not been;
And, ever and anon, strange sounds were heard between.

XIX.

First shrilled an unrepeated female shriek! -
It seemed as if Don Roderick knew the call,
For the bold blood was blanching in his cheek. -
Then answered kettle-drum and attabal,
Gong-peal and cymbal-clank the ear appal,
The Tecbir war-cry, and the Lelie's yell,
Ring wildly dissonant along the hall.
Needs not to Roderick their dread import tell -
"The Moor!" he cried, "the Moor! - ring out the Tocsin bell!

XX.

"They come! they come! I see the groaning lands
White with the turbans of each Arab horde;
Swart Zaarah joins her misbelieving bands,
Alla and Mahomet their battle-word,
The choice they yield, the Koran or the Sword -
See how the Christians rush to arms amain! -
In yonder shout the voice of conflict roared,
The shadowy hosts are closing on the plain -
Now, God and Saint Iago strike, for the good cause of Spain!

XXI.

"By Heaven, the Moors prevail! the Christians yield!
Their coward leader gives for flight the sign!
The sceptred craven mounts to quit the field -

Is not yon steed Orelio? - Yes, ’tis mine!
But never was she turned from battle-line:
Lo! where the recreant spurs o’er stock and stone! -
Curses pursue the slave, and wrath divine!
Rivers ingulph him!” - ”Hush,” in shuddering tone,
The Prelate said; “rash Prince, yon visioned form’s thine own.”

XXII.

Just then, a torrent crossed the flier’s course;
The dangerous ford the Kingly Likeness tried;
But the deep eddies whelmed both man and horse,
Swept like benighted peasant down the tide;
And the proud Moslemah spread far and wide,
As numerous as their native locust band;
Berber and Ismael’s sons the spoils divide,
With naked scimitars mete out the land,
And for the bondsmen base the free-born natives brand.

XXIII.

Then rose the grated Harem, to enclose
The loveliest maidens of the Christian line;
Then, menials, to their misbelieving foes,
Castile’s young nobles held forbidden wine;
Then, too, the holy Cross, salvation’s sign,
By impious hands was from the altar thrown,
And the deep aisles of the polluted shrine
Echoed, for holy hymn and organ-tone,
The Santon’s frantic dance, the Fakir’s gibbering moan.

XXIV.

How fares Don Roderick? - E’en as one who spies
Flames dart their glare o’er midnight’s sable woof,
And hears around his children’s piercing cries,
And sees the pale assistants stand aloof;
While cruel Conscience brings him bitter proof,
His folly, or his crime, have caused his grief;
And while above him nods the crumbling roof,

He curses earth and Heaven - himself in chief -
Desperate of earthly aid, despairing Heaven’s relief!

XXV.

That scythe-armed Giant turned his fatal glass
And twilight on the landscape closed her wings;
Far to Asturian hills the war-sounds pass,
And in their stead rebeck or timbrel rings;
And to the sound the bell-decked dancer springs,
Bazars resound as when their marts are met,
In tourney light the Moor his jerrid flings,
And on the land as evening seemed to set,
The Imaum’s chant was heard from mosque or minaret.

XXVI.

So passed that pageant. Ere another came,
The visionary scene was wrapped in smoke
Whose sulph’rous wreaths were crossed by sheets of flame;
With every flash a bolt explosive broke,
Till Roderick deemed the fiends had burst their yoke,
And waved ’gainst heaven the infernal gonfalone!
For War a new and dreadful language spoke,
Never by ancient warrior heard or known;
Lightning and smoke her breath, and thunder was her tone.

XXVII.

From the dim landscape rolled the clouds away -
The Christians have regained their heritage;
Before the Cross has waned the Crescent’s ray,
And many a monastery decks the stage,
And lofty church, and low-browed hermitage.
The land obeys a Hermit and a Knight, -
The Genii those of Spain for many an age;
This clad in sackcloth, that in armour bright,
And that was VALOUR named, this BIGOTRY was hight.

XXVIII.

VALOUR was harnessed like a chief of old,

Armed at all points, and prompt for knightly gest;
His sword was tempered in the Ebro cold,
Morena’s eagle plume adorned his crest,
The spoils of Afric’s lion bound his breast.
Fierce he stepped forward and flung down his gage;
As if of mortal kind to brave the best.
Him followed his Companion, dark and sage,
As he, my Master, sung the dangerous Archimage.

XXIX.

Haughty of heart and brow the Warrior came,
In look and language proud as proud might be,
Vaunting his lordship, lineage, fights, and fame:
Yet was that barefoot Monk more proud than he:
And as the ivy climbs the tallest tree,
So round the loftiest soul his toils he wound,
And with his spells subdued the fierce and free,
Till ermined Age and Youth in arms renowned,
Honouring his scourge and haircloth, meekly kissed the ground.

XXX.

And thus it chanced that VALOUR, peerless knight,
Who ne’er to King or Kaiser vailed his crest,
Victorious still in bull-feast or in fight,
Since first his limbs with mail he did invest,
Stooped ever to that Anchoret’s behest;
Nor reasoned of the right, nor of the wrong,
But at his bidding laid the lance in rest,
And wrought fell deeds the troubled world along,
For he was fierce as brave, and pitiless as strong.

XXXI.

Oft his proud galleys sought some new-found world,
That latest sees the sun, or first the morn;
Still at that Wizard’s feet their spoils he hurled, -
Ingots of ore from rich Potosi borne,
Crowns by Caciques, aigrettes by Omrahs worn,

Wrought of rare gems, but broken, rent, and foul;
Idols of gold from heathen temples torn,
Bedabbled all with blood. - With grisly scowl
The Hermit marked the stains, and smiled beneath his cowl.

XXXII.

Then did he bless the offering, and bade make
Tribute to Heaven of gratitude and praise;
And at his word the choral hymns awake,
And many a hand the silver censer sways,
But with the incense-breath these censers raise,
Mix steams from corpses smouldering in the fire;
The groans of prisoned victims mar the lays,
And shrieks of agony confound the quire;
While, ’mid the mingled sounds, the darkened scenes expire.

XXXIII.

Preluding light, were strains of music heard,
As once again revolved that measured sand;
Such sounds as when, for silvan dance prepared,
Gay Xeres summons forth her vintage band;
When for the light bolero ready stand
The mozo blithe, with gay muchacha met,
He conscious of his broidered cap and band,
She of her netted locks and light corsette,
Each tiptoe perched to spring, and shake the castanet.

XXXIV.

And well such strains the opening scene became;
For VALOUR had relaxed his ardent look,
And at a lady’s feet, like lion tame,
Lay stretched, full loath the weight of arms to brook;
And softened BIGOTRY, upon his book,
Pattered a task of little good or ill:
But the blithe peasant plied his pruning-hook,
Whistled the muleteer o’er vale and hill,
And rung from village-green the merry seguidille.

XXXV.

Grey Royalty, grown impotent of toil,
Let the grave sceptre slip his lazy hold;
And, careless, saw his rule become the spoil
Of a loose Female and her minion bold.
But peace was on the cottage and the fold,
From Court intrigue, from bickering faction far;
Beneath the chestnut-tree Love's tale was told,
And to the tinkling of the light guitar,
Sweet stooped the western sun, sweet rose the evening star.

XXXVI.

As that sea-cloud, in size like human hand,
When first from Carmel by the Tishbite seen,
Came slowly overshadowing Israel's land,
A while, perchance, bedecked with colours sheen,
While yet the sunbeams on its skirts had been,
Limning with purple and with gold its shroud,
Till darker folds obscured the blue serene
And blotted heaven with one broad sable cloud,
Then sheeted rain burst down, and whirlwinds howled aloud:-

XXXVII.

Even so, upon that peaceful scene was poured,
Like gathering clouds, full many a foreign band,
And HE, their Leader, wore in sheath his sword,
And offered peaceful front and open hand,
Veiling the perjured treachery he planned,
By friendship's zeal and honour's specious guise,
Until he won the passes of the land;
Then burst were honour's oath and friendship's ties!
He clutched his vulture grasp, and called fair Spain his prize.

XXXVIII.

An iron crown his anxious forehead bore;
And well such diadem his heart became,
Who ne'er his purpose for remorse gave o'er,

Or checked his course for piety or shame;
Who, trained a soldier, deemed a soldier's fame
Might flourish in the wreath of battles won,
Though neither truth nor honour decked his name;
Who, placed by fortune on a Monarch's throne,
Recked not of Monarch's faith, or Mercy's kingly tone.

XXXIX.

From a rude isle his ruder lineage came,
The spark, that, from a suburb-hovel's hearth
Ascending, wraps some capital in flame,
Hath not a meaner or more sordid birth.
And for the soul that bade him waste the earth -
The sable land-flood from some swamp obscure
That poisons the glad husband-field with dearth,
And by destruction bids its fame endure,
Hath not a source more sullen, stagnant, and impure.

XL.

Before that Leader strode a shadowy Form;
Her limbs like mist, her torch like meteor showed,
With which she beckoned him through fight and storm,
And all he crushed that crossed his desperate road,
Nor thought, nor feared, nor looked on what he trode.
Realms could not glut his pride, blood could not slake,
So oft as e'er she shook her torch abroad -
It was AMBITION bade her terrors wake,
Nor deigned she, as of yore, a milder form to take.

XLI.

No longer now she spurned at mean revenge,
Or stayed her hand for conquered foeman's moan;
As when, the fates of aged Rome to change,
By Cæsar's side she crossed the Rubicon.
Nor joyed she to bestow the spoils she won,
As when the banded powers of Greece were tasked
To war beneath the Youth of Macedon:

No seemly veil her modern minion asked,
He saw her hideous face, and loved the fiend unmasked.

XLII.

That Prelate marked his march - On banners blazed
With battles won in many a distant land,
On eagle-standards and on arms he gazed;
"And hopest thou, then," he said, "thy power shall stand?
Oh! thou hast builded on the shifting sand,
And thou hast tempered it with slaughter's flood;
And know, fell scourge in the Almighty's hand,
Gore-moistened trees shall perish in the bud,
And by a bloody death shall die the Man of Blood!"

XLIII.

The ruthless Leader beckoned from his train
A wan fraternal Shade, and bade him kneel,
And paled his temples with the crown of Spain,
While trumpets rang, and heralds cried "Castile!"
Not that he loved him - No! - In no man's weal,
Scarce in his own, e'er joyed that sullen heart;
Yet round that throne he bade his warriors wheel,
That the poor puppet might perform his part,
And be a sceptred slave, at his stern beck to start.

XLIV.

But on the Natives of that Land misused,
Not long the silence of amazement hung,
Nor brooked they long their friendly faith abused;
For, with a common shriek, the general tongue
Exclaimed, "To arms!" - and fast to arms they sprung.
And VALOUR woke, that Genius of the Land!
Pleasure, and ease, and sloth aside he flung,
As burst the awakening Nazarite his band,
When 'gainst his treacherous foes he clenched his dreadful hand.

XLV.

That Mimic Monarch now cast anxious eye

Upon the Satraps that begirt him round,
Now doffed his royal robe in act to fly,
And from his brow the diadem unbound.
So oft, so near, the Patriot bugle wound,
From Tarik's walls to Bilboa's mountains blown,
These martial satellites hard labour found
To guard awhile his substituted throne -
Light recking of his cause, but battling for their own.

XLVI.

From Alpuhara's peak that bugle rung,
And it was echoed from Corunna's wall;
Stately Seville responsive war-shot flung,
Grenada caught it in her Moorish hall;
Galicia bade her children fight or fall,
Wild Biscay shook his mountain-coronet,
Valencia roused her at the battle-call,
And, foremost still where Valour's sons are met,
First started to his gun each fiery Miquelet.

XLVII.

But unappalled, and burning for the fight,
The Invaders march, of victory secure;
Skilful their force to sever or unite,
And trained alike to vanquish or endure.
Nor skilful less, cheap conquest to ensure,
Discord to breathe, and jealousy to sow,
To quell by boasting, and by bribes to lure;
While nought against them bring the unpractised foe,
Save hearts for Freedom's cause, and hands for Freedom's blow.

XLVIII.

Proudly they march - but, oh! they march not forth
By one hot field to crown a brief campaign,
As when their Eagles, sweeping through the North,
Destroyed at every stoop an ancient reign!
Far other fate had Heaven decreed for Spain;

In vain the steel, in vain the torch was plied,
New Patriot armies started from the slain,
High blazed the war, and long, and far, and wide,
And oft the God of Battles blest the righteous side.

XLIX.

Nor unatoned, where Freedom's foes prevail,
Remained their savage waste. With blade and brand
By day the Invaders ravaged hill and dale,
But, with the darkness, the Guerilla band
Came like night's tempest, and avenged the land,
And claimed for blood the retribution due,
Probed the hard heart, and lopped the murd'rous hand;
And Dawn, when o'er the scene her beams she threw
'Midst ruins they had made, the spoilers' corpses knew.

L.

What minstrel verse may sing, or tongue may tell,
Amid the visioned strife from sea to sea,
How oft the Patriot banners rose or fell,
Still honoured in defeat as victory!
For that sad pageant of events to be
Showed every form of fight by field and flood;
Slaughter and Ruin, shouting forth their glee,
Beheld, while riding on the tempest scud,
The waters choked with slain, the earth bedrenched with blood!

LI.

Then Zaragoza - blighted be the tongue
That names thy name without the honour due!
For never hath the harp of Minstrel rung,
Of faith so felly proved, so firmly true!
Mine, sap, and bomb thy shattered ruins knew,
Each art of war's extremity had room,
Twice from thy half-sacked streets the foe withdrew,
And when at length stern fate decreed thy doom,
They won not Zaragoza, but her children's bloody tomb.

LII.

Yet raise thy head, sad city! Though in chains,
Enthralled thou canst not be! Arise, and claim
Reverence from every heart where Freedom reigns,
For what thou worshippest! - thy sainted dame,
She of the Column, honoured be her name
By all, whate’er their creed, who honour love!
And like the sacred relics of the flame,
That gave some martyr to the blessed above,
To every loyal heart may thy sad embers prove!

LIII.

Nor thine alone such wreck. Gerona fair!
Faithful to death thy heroes shall be sung,
Manning the towers, while o’er their heads the air
Swart as the smoke from raging furnace hung;
Now thicker darkening where the mine was sprung,
Now briefly lightened by the cannon’s flare,
Now arched with fire-sparks as the bomb was flung,
And reddening now with conflagration’s glare,
While by the fatal light the foes for storm prepare.

LIV.

While all around was danger, strife, and fear,
While the earth shook, and darkened was the sky,
And wide Destruction stunned the listening ear,
Appalled the heart, and stupefied the eye, -
Afar was heard that thrice-repeated cry,
In which old Albion’s heart and tongue unite,
Whene’er her soul is up, and pulse beats high,
Whether it hail the wine-cup or the fight,
And bid each arm be strong, or bid each heart be light.

LV.

Don Roderick turned him as the shout grew loud -
A varied scene the changeful vision showed,
For, where the ocean mingled with the cloud,

A gallant navy stemmed the billows broad.
From mast and stern St. George’s symbol flowed,
Blent with the silver cross to Scotland dear;
Mottling the sea their landward barges rowed,
And flashed the sun on bayonet, brand, and spear,
And the wild beach returned the seamen’s jovial cheer.

LVI.

It was a dread, yet spirit-stirring sight!
The billows foamed beneath a thousand oars,
Fast as they land the red-cross ranks unite,
Legions on legions bright’ning all the shores.
Then banners rise, and cannon-signal roars,
Then peals the warlike thunder of the drum,
Thrills the loud fife, the trumpet-flourish pours,
And patriot hopes awake, and doubts are dumb,
For, bold in Freedom’s cause, the bands of Ocean come!

LVII.

A various host they came - whose ranks display
Each mode in which the warrior meets the fight,
The deep battalion locks its firm array,
And meditates his aim the marksman light;
Far glance the light of sabres flashing bright
Where mounted squadrons shake the echoing mead,
Lacks not artillery breathing flame and night,
Nor the fleet ordnance whirled by rapid steed,
That rivals lightning’s flash in ruin and in speed.

LVIII.

A various host - from kindred realms they came,
Brethren in arms, but rivals in renown -
For yon fair bands shall merry England claim,
And with their deeds of valour deck her crown.
Hers their bold port, and hers their martial frown,
And hers their scorn of death in freedom’s cause,
Their eyes of azure, and their locks of brown,

And the blunt speech that bursts without a pause,
And free-born thoughts which league the Soldier with the Laws.

LIX.

And, oh! loved warriors of the Minstrel's land!
Yonder your bonnets nod, your tartans wave!
The rugged form may mark the mountain band,
And harsher features, and a mien more grave;
But ne'er in battlefield throbbed heart so brave
As that which beats beneath the Scottish plaid;
And when the pibroch bids the battle rave,
And level for the charge your arms are laid,
Where lives the desperate foe that for such onset stayed!

LX.

Hark! from yon stately ranks what laughter rings,
Mingling wild mirth with war's stern minstrelsy,
His jest while each blithe comrade round him flings,
And moves to death with military glee:
Boast, Erin, boast them! tameless, frank, and free,
In kindness warm, and fierce in danger known,
Rough Nature's children, humorous as she:
And HE, yon Chieftain - strike the proudest tone
Of thy bold harp, green Isle! - the Hero is thine own.

LXI.

Now on the scene Vimeira should be shown,
On Talavera's fight should Roderick gaze,
And hear Corunna wail her battle won,
And see Busaco's crest with lightning blaze:-
But shall fond fable mix with heroes' praise?
Hath Fiction's stage for Truth's long triumphs room?
And dare her wild flowers mingle with the bays
That claim a long eternity to bloom
Around the warrior's crest, and o'er the warrior's tomb!

LXII.

Or may I give adventurous Fancy scope,

And stretch a bold hand to the awful veil
That hides futurity from anxious hope,
Bidding beyond it scenes of glory hail,
And painting Europe rousing at the tale
Of Spain’s invaders from her confines hurled,
While kindling nations buckle on their mail,
And Fame, with clarion-blast and wings unfurled,
To Freedom and Revenge awakes an injured World!

LXIII.

O vain, though anxious, is the glance I cast,
Since Fate has marked futurity her own:
Yet Fate resigns to worth the glorious past,
The deeds recorded, and the laurels won.
Then, though the Vault of Destiny be gone,
King, Prelate, all the phantasms of my brain,
Melted away like mist-wreaths in the sun,
Yet grant for faith, for valour, and for Spain,
One note of pride and fire, a Patriot’s parting strain!

CONCLUSION.

I.

“Who shall command Estrella’s mountain-tide
Back to the source, when tempest-chafed, to hie?
Who, when Gascogne’s vexed gulf is raging wide,
Shall hush it as a nurse her infant’s cry?
His magic power let such vain boaster try,
And when the torrent shall his voice obey,
And Biscay’s whirlwinds list his lullaby,
Let him stand forth and bar mine eagles’ way,
And they shall heed his voice, and at his bidding stay.

II.

“Else ne’er to stoop, till high on Lisbon’s towers
They close their wings, the symbol of our yoke,
And their own sea hath whelmed yon red-cross powers!”
Thus, on the summit of Alverca’s rock
To Marshal, Duke, and Peer, Gaul’s Leader spoke.
While downward on the land his legions press,
Before them it was rich with vine and flock,
And smiled like Eden in her summer dress; -
Behind their wasteful march a reeking wilderness.

III.

And shall the boastful Chief maintain his word,
Though Heaven hath heard the wailings of the land,
Though Lusitania whet her vengeful sword,
Though Britons arm and WELLINGTON command!
No! grim Busaco’s iron ridge shall stand
An adamantine barrier to his force;
And from its base shall wheel his shattered band,
As from the unshaken rock the torrent hoarse
Bears off its broken waves, and seeks a devious course.

IV.

Yet not because Alcoba’s mountain-hawk
Hath on his best and bravest made her food,
In numbers confident, yon Chief shall baulk
His Lord’s imperial thirst for spoil and blood:
For full in view the promised conquest stood,
And Lisbon’s matrons from their walls might sum
The myriads that had half the world subdued,
And hear the distant thunders of the drum,
That bids the bands of France to storm and havoc come.

V.

Four moons have heard these thunders idly rolled,
Have seen these wistful myriads eye their prey,
As famished wolves survey a guarded fold -

But in the middle path a Lion lay!
At length they move - but not to battle-fray,
Nor blaze yon fires where meets the manly fight;
Beacons of infamy, they light the way
Where cowardice and cruelty unite
To damn with double shame their ignominious flight.

VI.

O triumph for the Fiends of Lust and Wrath!
Ne'er to be told, yet ne'er to be forgot,
What wanton horrors marked their wreckful path!
The peasant butchered in his ruined cot,
The hoary priest even at the altar shot,
Childhood and age given o'er to sword and flame,
Woman to infamy; - no crime forgot,
By which inventive demons might proclaim
Immortal hate to man, and scorn of God's great name!

VII.

The rudest sentinel, in Britain born,
With horror paused to view the havoc done,
Gave his poor crust to feed some wretch forlorn,
Wiped his stern eye, then fiercer grasped his gun.
Nor with less zeal shall Britain's peaceful son
Exult the debt of sympathy to pay;
Riches nor poverty the tax shall shun,
Nor prince nor peer, the wealthy nor the gay,
Nor the poor peasant's mite, nor bard's more worthless lay.

VIII.

But thou - unfoughten wilt thou yield to Fate,
Minion of Fortune, now miscalled in vain!
Can vantage-ground no confidence create,
Marcella's pass, nor Guarda's mountain-chain?
Vainglorious fugitive! yet turn again!
Behold, where, named by some prophetic Seer,
Flows Honour's Fountain, {2} as foredoomed the stain

From thy dishonoured name and arms to clear -
Fallen Child of Fortune, turn, redeem her favour here!

IX.

Yet, ere thou turn’st, collect each distant aid;
Those chief that never heard the lion roar!
Within whose souls lives not a trace portrayed
Of Talavera or Mondego’s shore!
Marshal each band thou hast, and summon more;
Of war’s fell stratagems exhaust the whole;
Rank upon rank, squadron on squadron pour,
Legion on legion on thy foeman roll,
And weary out his arm - thou canst not quell his soul.

X.

O vainly gleams with steel Agueda’s shore,
Vainly thy squadrons hide Assuava’s plain,
And front the flying thunders as they roar,
With frantic charge and tenfold odds, in vain!
And what avails thee that, for CAMERON slain,
Wild from his plaided ranks the yell was given -
Vengeance and grief gave mountain-range the rein,
And, at the bloody spear-point headlong driven,
Thy Despot’s giant guards fled like the rack of heaven.

XI.

Go, baffled boaster! teach thy haughty mood
To plead at thine imperious master’s throne,
Say, thou hast left his legions in their blood,
Deceived his hopes, and frustrated thine own;
Say, that thine utmost skill and valour shown,
By British skill and valour were outvied;
Last say, thy conqueror was WELLINGTON!
And if he chafe, be his own fortune tried -
God and our cause to friend, the venture we’ll abide.

XII.

But you, ye heroes of that well-fought day,

How shall a bard, unknowing and unknown,
His meed to each victorious leader pay,
Or bind on every brow the laurels won?
Yet fain my harp would wake its boldest tone,
O’er the wide sea to hail CADOGAN brave;
And he, perchance, the minstrel-note might own,
Mindful of meeting brief that Fortune gave
’Mid yon far western isles that hear the Atlantic rave.

XIII.

Yes! hard the task, when Britons wield the sword,
To give each Chief and every field its fame:
Hark! Albuera thunders BERESFORD,
And Red Barosa shouts for dauntless GRÆME!
O for a verse of tumult and of flame,
Bold as the bursting of their cannon sound,
To bid the world re-echo to their fame!
For never, upon gory battle-ground,
With conquest’s well-bought wreath were braver victors crowned!

XIV.

O who shall grudge him Albuera’s bays,
Who brought a race regenerate to the field,
Roused them to emulate their fathers’ praise,
Tempered their headlong rage, their courage steeled,
And raised fair Lusitania’s fallen shield,
And gave new edge to Lusitania’s sword,
And taught her sons forgotten arms to wield -
Shivered my harp, and burst its every chord,
If it forget thy worth, victorious BERESFORD!

XV.

Not on that bloody field of battle won,
Though Gaul’s proud legions rolled like mist away,
Was half his self-devoted valour shown, -
He gaged but life on that illustrious day;
But when he toiled those squadrons to array,

Who fought like Britons in the bloody game,
Sharper than Polish pike or assagay,
He braved the shafts of censure and of shame,
And, dearer far than life, he pledged a soldier’s fame.

XVI.

Nor be his praise o’erpast who strove to hide
Beneath the warrior’s vest affection’s wound,
Whose wish Heaven for his country’s weal denied;
Danger and fate he sought, but glory found.
From clime to clime, where’er war’s trumpets sound,
The wanderer went; yet Caledonia! still
Thine was his thought in march and tented ground;
He dreamed ’mid Alpine cliffs of Athole’s hill,
And heard in Ebro’s roar his Lyndoch’s lovely rill.

XVII.

O hero of a race renowned of old,
Whose war-cry oft has waked the battle-swell,
Since first distinguished in the onset bold,
Wild sounding when the Roman rampart fell!
By Wallace’ side it rung the Southron’s knell,
Alderne, Kilsythe, and Tibber owned its fame,
Tummell’s rude pass can of its terrors tell,
But ne’er from prouder field arose the name
Than when wild Ronda learned the conquering shout of GRÆME!

XVIII.

But all too long, through seas unknown and dark,
(With Spenser’s parable I close my tale,)
By shoal and rock hath steered my venturous bark,
And landward now I drive before the gale.
And now the blue and distant shore I hail,
And nearer now I see the port expand,
And now I gladly furl my weary sail,
And, as the prow light touches on the strand,
I strike my red-cross flag and bind my skiff to land.

THE FIELD OF WATERLOO.

I.

Fair Brussels, thou art far behind,
Though, lingering on the morning wind,
  We yet may hear the hour
Pealed over orchard and canal,
With voice prolonged and measured fall,
  From proud St. Michael's tower;
Thy wood, dark Soignies, holds us now,
Where the tall beeches' glossy bough
  For many a league around,
With birch and darksome oak between,
Spreads deep and far a pathless screen,
  Of tangled forest ground.
Stems planted close by stems defy
The adventurous foot - the curious eye
  For access seeks in vain;
And the brown tapestry of leaves,
Strewed on the blighted ground, receives
  Nor sun, nor air, nor rain.
No opening glade dawns on our way,
No streamlet, glancing to the ray,
  Our woodland path has crossed;
And the straight causeway which we tread
Prolongs a line of dull arcade,
Unvarying through the unvaried shade
  Until in distance lost.

II.
A brighter, livelier scene succeeds;

In groups the scattering wood recedes,
Hedge-rows, and huts, and sunny meads,
  And corn-fields glance between;
The peasant, at his labour blithe,
Plies the hooked staff and shortened scythe:-
  But when these ears were green,
Placed close within destruction's scope,
Full little was that rustic's hope
  Their ripening to have seen!
And, lo, a hamlet and its fane:-
Let not the gazer with disdain
  Their architecture view;
For yonder rude ungraceful shrine,
And disproportioned spire, are thine,
  Immortal WATERLOO!

III.

Fear not the heat, though full and high
The sun has scorched the autumn sky,
And scarce a forest straggler now
To shade us spreads a greenwood bough;
These fields have seen a hotter day
Than e'er was fired by sunny ray,
Yet one mile on - yon shattered hedge
Crests the soft hill whose long smooth ridge
  Looks on the field below,
And sinks so gently on the dale
That not the folds of Beauty's veil
  In easier curves can flow.
Brief space from thence, the ground again
Ascending slowly from the plain
  Forms an opposing screen,
Which, with its crest of upland ground,
Shuts the horizon all around.
  The softened vale between
Slopes smooth and fair for courser's tread;
Not the most timid maid need dread

To give her snow-white palfrey head
  On that wide stubble-ground;
Nor wood, nor tree, nor bush are there,
Her course to intercept or scare,
  Nor fosse nor fence are found,
Save where, from out her shattered bowers,
Rise Hougomont’s dismantled towers.

IV.
Now, see’st thou aught in this lone scene
Can tell of that which late hath been? -
  A stranger might reply,
“The bare extent of stubble-plain
Seems lately lightened of its grain;
And yonder sable tracks remain
Marks of the peasant’s ponderous wain,
  When harvest-home was nigh.
On these broad spots of trampled ground,
Perchance the rustics danced such round
  As Teniers loved to draw;
And where the earth seems scorched by flame,
To dress the homely feast they came,
And toiled the kerchiefed village dame
  Around her fire of straw.”

V.
So deem’st thou - so each mortal deems,
Of that which is from that which seems:-
  But other harvest here
Than that which peasant’s scythe demands,
Was gathered in by sterner hands,
  With bayonet, blade, and spear.
No vulgar crop was theirs to reap,
No stinted harvest thin and cheap!
Heroes before each fatal sweep
  Fell thick as ripened grain;
And ere the darkening of the day,

Piled high as autumn shocks, there lay
The ghastly harvest of the fray,
  The corpses of the slain.

VI.
Ay, look again - that line, so black
And trampled, marks the bivouac,
Yon deep-graved ruts the artillery's track,
  So often lost and won;
And close beside, the hardened mud
Still shows where, fetlock-deep in blood,
The fierce dragoon, through battle's flood,
  Dashed the hot war-horse on.
These spots of excavation tell
The ravage of the bursting shell -
And feel'st thou not the tainted steam,
That reeks against the sultry beam,
  From yonder trenchéd mound?
The pestilential fumes declare
That Carnage has replenished there
  Her garner-house profound.

VII.
Far other harvest-home and feast,
Than claims the boor from scythe released,
  On these scorched fields were known!
Death hovered o'er the maddening rout,
And, in the thrilling battle-shout,
Sent for the bloody banquet out
  A summons of his own.
Through rolling smoke the Demon's eye
Could well each destined guest espy,
Well could his ear in ecstasy
  Distinguish every tone
That filled the chorus of the fray -
From cannon-roar and trumpet-bray,
From charging squadrons' wild hurra,

From the wild clang that marked their way, -
  Down to the dying groan,
And the last sob of life’s decay,
  When breath was all but flown.

VIII.
Feast on, stern foe of mortal life,
Feast on! - but think not that a strife,
With such promiscuous carnage rife,
  Protracted space may last;
The deadly tug of war at length
Must limits find in human strength,
  And cease when these are past.
Vain hope! - that morn’s o’erclouded sun
Heard the wild shout of fight begun
  Ere he attained his height,
And through the war-smoke, volumed high,
Still peals that unremitted cry,
  Though now he stoops to night.
For ten long hours of doubt and dread,
Fresh succours from the extended head
Of either hill the contest fed;
  Still down the slope they drew,
The charge of columns pauséd not,
Nor ceased the storm of shell and shot;
  For all that war could do
Of skill and force was proved that day,
And turned not yet the doubtful fray
  On bloody Waterloo.

IX.
Pale Brussels! then what thoughts were thine,
When ceaseless from the distant line
  Continued thunders came!
Each burgher held his breath, to hear
These forerunners of havoc near,
  Of rapine and of flame.

What ghastly sights were thine to meet,
When rolling through thy stately street,
The wounded showed their mangled plight
In token of the unfinished fight,
And from each anguish-laden wain
The blood-drops laid thy dust like rain!
How often in the distant drum
Heard'st thou the fell Invader come,
While Ruin, shouting to his band,
Shook high her torch and gory brand! -
Cheer thee, fair City! From yon stand,
Impatient, still his outstretched hand
  Points to his prey in vain,
While maddening in his eager mood,
And all unwont to be withstood,
  He fires the fight again.

X.

"On! On!" was still his stern exclaim;
"Confront the battery's jaws of flame!
  Rush on the levelled gun!
My steel-clad cuirassiers, advance!
Each Hulan forward with his lance,
My Guard - my Chosen - charge for France,
  France and Napoleon!"
Loud answered their acclaiming shout,
Greeting the mandate which sent out
Their bravest and their best to dare
The fate their leader shunned to share.
But HE, his country's sword and shield,
Still in the battle-front revealed,
Where danger fiercest swept the field,
  Came like a beam of light,
In action prompt, in sentence brief -
"Soldiers, stand firm!" exclaimed the Chief,
  "England shall tell the fight!"

XI.
On came the whirlwind - like the last
But fiercest sweep of tempest-blast -
On came the whirlwind - steel-gleams broke
Like lightning through the rolling smoke;
  The war was waked anew,
Three hundred cannon-mouths roared loud,
And from their throats, with flash and cloud,
  Their showers of iron threw.
Beneath their fire, in full career,
Rushed on the ponderous cuirassier,
The lancer couched his ruthless spear,
And hurrying as to havoc near,
  The cohorts' eagles flew.
In one dark torrent, broad and strong,
The advancing onset rolled along,
Forth harbingered by fierce acclaim,
That, from the shroud of smoke and flame,
Pealed wildly the imperial name.

XII.
But on the British heart were lost
The terrors of the charging host;
For not an eye the storm that viewed
Changed its proud glance of fortitude,
Nor was one forward footstep stayed,
As dropped the dying and the dead.
Fast as their ranks the thunders tear,
Fast they renewed each serried square;
And on the wounded and the slain
Closed their diminished files again,
Till from their line scarce spears'-lengths three,
Emerging from the smoke they see
Helmet, and plume, and panoply, -
  Then waked their fire at once!
Each musketeer's revolving knell,
As fast, as regularly fell,

As when they practise to display
Their discipline on festal day.
  Then down went helm and lance,
Down were the eagle banners sent,
Down reeling steeds and riders went,
Corslets were pierced, and pennons rent;
  And, to augment the fray,
Wheeled full against their staggering flanks,
The English horsemen’s foaming ranks
  Forced their resistless way.
Then to the musket-knell succeeds
The clash of swords - the neigh of steeds -
As plies the smith his clanging trade,
Against the cuirass rang the blade;
And while amid their close array
The well-served cannon rent their way,
And while amid their scattered band
Raged the fierce rider’s bloody brand,
Recoiled in common rout and fear,
Lancer and guard and cuirassier,
Horsemen and foot, - a mingled host
Their leaders fall’n, their standards lost.

XIII.
Then, WELLINGTON! thy piercing eye
This crisis caught of destiny -
  The British host had stood
That morn ’gainst charge of sword and lance
As their own ocean-rocks hold stance,
But when thy voice had said, “Advance!”
  They were their ocean’s flood. -
O Thou, whose inauspicious aim
Hath wrought thy host this hour of shame,
Think’st thou thy broken bands will bide
The terrors of yon rushing tide?
Or will thy chosen brook to feel
The British shock of levelled steel,

Or dost thou turn thine eye
Where coming squadrons gleam afar,
And fresher thunders wake the war,
And other standards fly? -
Think not that in yon columns, file
Thy conquering troops from distant Dyle -
Is Blucher yet unknown?
Or dwells not in thy memory still
(Heard frequent in thine hour of ill),
What notes of hate and vengeance thrill
In Prussia's trumpet-tone? -
What yet remains? - shall it be thine
To head the relics of thy line
In one dread effort more? -
The Roman lore thy leisure loved,
And than canst tell what fortune proved
That Chieftain, who, of yore,
Ambition's dizzy paths essayed
And with the gladiators' aid
For empire enterprised -
He stood the cast his rashness played,
Left not the victims he had made,
Dug his red grave with his own blade,
And on the field he lost was laid,
Abhorred - but not despised.

XIV.
But if revolves thy fainter thought
On safety - howsoever bought, -
Then turn thy fearful rein and ride,
Though twice ten thousand men have died
On this eventful day
To gild the military fame
Which thou, for life, in traffic tame
Wilt barter thus away.
Shall future ages tell this tale
Of inconsistence faint and frail?

And art thou He of Lodi’s bridge,
Marengo’s field, and Wagram’s ridge!
Or is thy soul like mountain-tide,
That, swelled by winter storm and shower,
Rolls down in turbulence of power,
  A torrent fierce and wide;
Reft of these aids, a rill obscure,
Shrinking unnoticed, mean and poor,
  Whose channel shows displayed
The wrecks of its impetuous course,
But not one symptom of the force
  By which these wrecks were made!

XV.

Spur on thy way! - since now thine ear
Has brooked thy veterans’ wish to hear,
  Who, as thy flight they eyed
Exclaimed, - while tears of anguish came,
Wrung forth by pride, and rage, and shame,
  “O that he had but died!”
But yet, to sum this hour of ill,
Look, ere thou leav’st the fatal hill,
  Back on yon broken ranks -
Upon whose wild confusion gleams
The moon, as on the troubled streams
  When rivers break their banks,
And, to the ruined peasant’s eye,
Objects half seen roll swiftly by,
  Down the dread current hurled -
So mingle banner, wain, and gun,
Where the tumultuous flight rolls on
Of warriors, who, when morn begun,
  Defied a banded world.

XVI.

List - frequent to the hurrying rout,
The stern pursuers’ vengeful shout

Tells, that upon their broken rear
Rages the Prussian’s bloody spear.
  So fell a shriek was none,
When Beresina’s icy flood
Reddened and thawed with flame and blood,
And, pressing on thy desperate way,
Raised oft and long their wild hurra,
  The children of the Don.
Thine ear no yell of horror cleft
So ominous, when, all bereft
Of aid, the valiant Polack left -
Ay, left by thee - found soldiers grave
In Leipsic’s corpse-encumbered wave.
Fate, in those various perils past,
Reserved thee still some future cast;
On the dread die thou now hast thrown
Hangs not a single field alone,
Nor one campaign - thy martial fame,
Thy empire, dynasty, and name
  Have felt the final stroke;
And now, o’er thy devoted head
The last stern vial’s wrath is shed,
  The last dread seal is broke.

XVII.
Since live thou wilt - refuse not now
Before these demagogues to bow,
Late objects of thy scorn and hate,
Who shall thy once imperial fate
Make wordy theme of vain debate. -
Or shall we say, thou stoop’st less low
In seeking refuge from the foe,
Against whose heart, in prosperous life,
Thine hand hath ever held the knife?
  Such homage hath been paid
By Roman and by Grecian voice,
And there were honour in the choice,

If it were freely made.
Then safely come - in one so low, -
So lost, - we cannot own a foe;
Though dear experience bid us end,
In thee we ne’er can hail a friend. -
Come, howsoe’er - but do not hide
Close in thy heart that germ of pride,
Erewhile, by gifted bard espied,
That “yet imperial hope;”
Think not that for a fresh rebound,
To raise ambition from the ground,
We yield thee means or scope.
In safety come - but ne’er again
Hold type of independent reign;
No islet calls thee lord,
We leave thee no confederate band,
No symbol of thy lost command,
To be a dagger in the hand
From which we wrenched the sword.

XVIII.
Yet, even in yon sequestered spot,
May worthier conquest be thy lot
Than yet thy life has known;
Conquest, unbought by blood or harm,
That needs nor foreign aid nor arm,
A triumph all thine own.
Such waits thee when thou shalt control
Those passions wild, that stubborn soul,
That marred thy prosperous scene:-
Hear this - from no unmovéd heart,
Which sighs, comparing what THOU ART
With what thou MIGHT’ST HAVE BEEN!

XIX.
Thou, too, whose deeds of fame renewed
Bankrupt a nation’s gratitude,

To thine own noble heart must owe
More than the meed she can bestow.
For not a people’s just acclaim,
Not the full hail of Europe’s fame,
Thy Prince’s smiles, the State’s decree,
The ducal rank, the gartered knee,
Not these such pure delight afford
As that, when hanging up thy sword,
Well may’st thou think, “This honest steel
Was ever drawn for public weal;
And, such was rightful Heaven’s decree,
Ne’er sheathed unless with victory!”

XX.

Look forth, once more, with softened heart,
Ere from the field of fame we part;
Triumph and Sorrow border near,
And joy oft melts into a tear.
Alas! what links of love that morn
Has War’s rude hand asunder torn!
For ne’er was field so sternly fought,
And ne’er was conquest dearer bought,
Here piled in common slaughter sleep
Those whom affection long shall weep
Here rests the sire, that ne’er shall strain
His orphans to his heart again;
The son, whom, on his native shore,
The parent’s voice shall bless no more;
The bridegroom, who has hardly pressed
His blushing consort to his breast;
The husband, whom through many a year
Long love and mutual faith endear.
Thou canst not name one tender tie,
But here dissolved its relics lie!
Oh! when thou see’st some mourner’s veil
Shroud her thin form and visage pale,
Or mark’st the Matron’s bursting tears

Stream when the stricken drum she hears;
Or see’st how manlier grief, suppressed,
Is labouring in a father’s breast, -
With no inquiry vain pursue
The cause, but think on Waterloo!

XXI.
Period of honour as of woes,
What bright careers ’twas thine to close! -
Marked on thy roll of blood what names
To Britain’s memory, and to Fame’s,
Laid there their last immortal claims!
Thou saw’st in seas of gore expire
Redoubted PICTON’S soul of fire -
Saw’st in the mingled carnage lie
All that of PONSONBY could die -
DE LANCEY change Love’s bridal-wreath
For laurels from the hand of Death -
Saw’st gallant MILLER’S failing eye
Still bent where Albion’s banners fly,
And CAMERON, in the shock of steel,
Die like the offspring of Lochiel;
And generous GORDON, ’mid the strife,
Fall while he watched his leader’s life. -
Ah! though her guardian angel’s shield
Fenced Britain’s hero through the field.
Fate not the less her power made known,
Through his friends’ hearts to pierce his own!

XXII.
Forgive, brave Dead, the imperfect lay!
Who may your names, your numbers, say?
What high-strung harp, what lofty line,
To each the dear-earned praise assign,
From high-born chiefs of martial fame
To the poor soldier’s lowlier name?
Lightly ye rose that dawning day,

From your cold couch of swamp and clay,
To fill, before the sun was low,
The bed that morning cannot know. -
Oft may the tear the green sod steep,
And sacred be the heroes' sleep,
  Till time shall cease to run;
And ne'er beside their noble grave,
May Briton pass and fail to crave
A blessing on the fallen brave
  Who fought with Wellington!

XXIII.
Farewell, sad Field! whose blighted face
Wears desolation's withering trace;
  Long shall my memory retain
Thy shattered huts and trampled grain,
With every mark of martial wrong,
That scathe thy towers, fair Hougomont!
Yet though thy garden's green arcade
The marksman's fatal post was made,
Though on thy shattered beeches fell
The blended rage of shot and shell,
Though from thy blackened portals torn,
Their fall thy blighted fruit-trees mourn,
Has not such havoc bought a name
Immortal in the rolls of fame?
Yes - Agincourt may be forgot,
And Cressy be an unknown spot,
  And Blenheim's name be new;
But still in story and in song,
For many an age remembered long,
Shall live the towers of Hougomont
  And Field of Waterloo!

CONCLUSION.

Stern tide of human Time! that know’st not rest,
But, sweeping from the cradle to the tomb,
Bear’st ever downward on thy dusky breast
Successive generations to their doom;
While thy capacious stream has equal room
For the gay bark where Pleasure’s steamers sport,
And for the prison-ship of guilt and gloom,
The fisher-skiff, and barge that bears a court,
Still wafting onward all to one dark silent port; -

Stern tide of Time! through what mysterious change
Of hope and fear have our frail barks been driven!
For ne’er, before, vicissitude so strange
Was to one race of Adam’s offspring given.
And sure such varied change of sea and heaven,
Such unexpected bursts of joy and woe,
Such fearful strife as that where we have striven,
Succeeding ages ne’er again shall know,
Until the awful term when Thou shalt cease to flow.

Well hast thou stood, my Country! - the brave fight
Hast well maintained through good report and ill;
In thy just cause and in thy native might,
And in Heaven’s grace and justice constant still;
Whether the banded prowess, strength, and skill
Of half the world against thee stood arrayed,
Or when, with better views and freer will,
Beside thee Europe’s noblest drew the blade,
Each emulous in arms the Ocean Queen to aid.

Well art thou now repaid - though slowly rose,
And struggled long with mists thy blaze of fame,
While like the dawn that in the orient glows
On the broad wave its earlier lustre came;
Then eastern Egypt saw the growing flame,
And Maida’s myrtles gleamed beneath its ray,

Where first the soldier, stung with generous shame,
Rivalled the heroes of the watery way,
And washed in foemen’s gore unjust reproach away.

Now, Island Empress, wave thy crest on high,
And bid the banner of thy Patron flow,
Gallant Saint George, the flower of Chivalry,
For thou halt faced, like him, a dragon foe,
And rescued innocence from overthrow,
And trampled down, like him, tyrannic might,
And to the gazing world may’st proudly show
The chosen emblem of thy sainted Knight,
Who quelled devouring pride and vindicated right.

Yet ’mid the confidence of just renown,
Renown dear-bought, but dearest thus acquired,
Write, Britain, write the moral lesson down:
’Tis not alone the heart with valour fired,
The discipline so dreaded and admired,
In many a field of bloody conquest known,
- Such may by fame be lured, by gold be hired:
’Tis constancy in the good cause alone
Best justifies the meed thy valiant sons have won.

THE DANCE OF DEATH. [1815.]

I.
Night and morning were at meeting
Over Waterloo;
Cocks had sung their earliest greeting;
Faint and low they crew,
For no paly beam yet shone
On the heights of Mount Saint John;
Tempest-clouds prolonged the sway
Of timeless darkness over day;
Whirlwind, thunder-clap, and shower
Marked it a predestined hour.
Broad and frequent through the night
Flashed the sheets of levin-light:
Muskets, glancing lightnings back,
Showed the dreary bivouac
Where the soldier lay,
Chill and stiff, and drenched with rain,
Wishing dawn of morn again,
Though death should come with day.

II.
'Tis at such a tide and hour
Wizard, witch, and fiend have power,
And ghastly forms through mist and shower
Gleam on the gifted ken;
And then the affrighted prophet's ear
Drinks whispers strange of fate and fear
Presaging death and ruin near
Among the sons of men; -
Apart from Albyn's war-array,

’Twas then grey Allan sleepless lay;
Grey Allan, who, for many a day,
  Had followed stout and stern,
Where, through battle’s rout and reel,
Storm of shot and edge of steel,
Led the grandson of Lochiel,
  Valiant Fassiefern.
Through steel and shot he leads no more,
Low laid ’mid friends’ and foemen’s gore -
But long his native lake’s wild shore,
And Sunart rough, and high Ardgower,
  And Morven long shall tell,
And proud Bennevis hear with awe
How, upon bloody Quatre-Bras,
Brave Cameron heard the wild hurra
  Of conquest as he fell.

III.
Lone on the outskirts of the host,
The weary sentinel held post,
And heard, through darkness far aloof,
The frequent clang of courser’s hoof,
Where held the cloaked patrol their course,
And spurred ’gainst storm the swerving horse;
But there are sounds in Allan’s ear,
Patrol nor sentinel may hear,
And sights before his eye aghast
Invisible to them have passed,
  When down the destined plain,
’Twixt Britain and the bands of France,
Wild as marsh-borne meteor’s glance,
Strange phantoms wheeled a revel dance,
  And doomed the future slain. -
Such forms were seen, such sounds were heard,
When Scotland’s James his march prepared
  For Flodden’s fatal plain;
Such, when he drew his ruthless sword,

As Choosers of the Slain, adored
  The yet unchristened Dane.
An indistinct and phantom band,
They wheeled their ring-dance hand in hand,
  With gestures wild and dread;
The Seer, who watched them ride the storm,
Saw through their faint and shadowy form
  The lightning's flash more red;
And still their ghastly roundelay
Was of the coming battle-fray,
  And of the destined dead.

IV. SONG.

Wheel the wild dance
While lightnings glance,
  And thunders rattle loud,
And call the brave
To bloody grave,
  To sleep without a shroud.

Our airy feet,
So light and fleet,
  They do not bend the rye
That sinks its head when whirlwinds rave,
And swells again in eddying wave,
  As each wild gust blows by;
But still the corn,
At dawn of morn,
  Our fatal steps that bore,
At eve lies waste,
A trampled paste
  Of blackening mud and gore.
Wheel the wild dance
While lightnings glance,
  And thunders rattle loud,
And call the brave

To bloody grave,
  To sleep without a shroud.

V.
Wheel the wild dance!
Brave sons of France,
  For you our ring makes room;
Make space full wide
For martial pride,
  For banner, spear, and plume.
Approach, draw near,
Proud cuirassier!
  Room for the men of steel!
Through crest and plate
The broadsword’s weight
  Both head and heart shall feel.

VI.
Wheel the wild dance
While lightnings glance,
  And thunders rattle loud,
And call the brave
To bloody grave,
  To sleep without a shroud.

Sons of the spear!
You feel us near
  In many a ghastly dream;
With fancy’s eye
Our forms you spy,
  And hear our fatal scream.
With clearer sight
Ere falls the night,
  Just when to weal or woe
Your disembodied souls take flight
On trembling wing - each startled sprite
  Our choir of death shall know.

VII.
Wheel the wild dance
While lightnings glance,
  And thunders rattle loud,
And call the brave
To bloody grave,
  To sleep without a shroud.

Burst, ye clouds, in tempest showers,
Redder rain shall soon be ours -
  See the east grows wan -
Yield we place to sterner game,
Ere deadlier bolts and direr flame
Shall the welkin’s thunders shame,
Elemental rage is tame
  To the wrath of man.

VIII.
At morn, grey Allan’s mates with awe
Heard of the visioned sights he saw,
  The legend heard him say;
But the Seer’s gifted eye was dim,
Deafened his ear, and stark his limb,
  Ere closed that bloody day.
He sleeps far from his Highland heath,
But often of the Dance of Death
  His comrades tell the tale
On picquet-post, when ebbs the night,
And waning watch-fires glow less bright,
  And dawn is glimmering pale.

ROMANCE OF DUNOIS. FROM THE FRENCH. [1815.]

[The original of this little Romance makes part of a manuscript collection of French Songs, probably compiled by some young officer, which was found on the field of Waterloo, so much stained with clay and with blood as sufficiently to indicate what had been the fate of its late owner. The song is popular in France, and is rather a good specimen of the style of composition to which it belongs. The translation is strictly literal.]

It was Dunois, the young and brave, was bound for Palestine,
But first he made his orisons before Saint Mary's shrine:
"And grant, immortal Queen of Heaven," was still the Soldier's prayer;
That I may prove the bravest knight, and love the fairest fair."

His oath of honour on the shrine he graved it with his sword,
And followed to the Holy Land the banner of his Lord;
Where, faithful to his noble vow, his war-cry filled the air,
"Be honoured aye the bravest knight, beloved the fairest fair."

They owed the conquest to his arm, and then his Liege-Lord said,
"The heart that has for honour beat by bliss must be repaid. -
My daughter Isabel and thou shall be a wedded pair,
For thou art bravest of the brave, she fairest of the fair."

And then they bound the holy knot before Saint Mary's shrine,
That makes a paradise on earth, if hearts and hands combine;
And every lord and lady bright that were in chapel there
Cried, "Honoured be the bravest knight, beloved the fairest fair!"

THE TROUBADOUR. FROM THE SAME COLLECTION. [1815.]

Glowing with love, on fire for fame
  A Troubadour that hated sorrow
Beneath his lady's window came,
  And thus he sung his last good-morrow:
"My arm it is my country's right,
  My heart is in my true-love's bower;
Gaily for love and fame to fight
  Befits the gallant Troubadour."

And while he marched with helm on head
  And harp in hand, the descant rung,
As faithful to his favourite maid,
  The minstrel-burden still he sung:
"My arm it is my country's right,
  My heart is in my lady's bower;
Resolved for love and fame to fight
  I come, a gallant Troubadour."

Even when the battle-roar was deep,
  With dauntless heart he hewed his way,
'Mid splintering lance and falchion-sweep,
  And still was heard his warrior-lay:
"My life it is my country's right,
  My heart is in my lady's bower;
For love to die, for fame to fight,
  Becomes the valiant Troubadour."

Alas! upon the bloody field
  He fell beneath the foeman’s glaive,
But still reclining on his shield,
  Expiring sung the exulting stave:-
“My life it is my country’s right,
  My heart is in my lady’s bower;
For love and fame to fall in fight
  Becomes the valiant Troubadour.”

PIBROCH OF DONALD DHU.

[This is a very ancient pibroch belonging to Clan MacDonald. The words of the set, theme, or melody, to which the pipe variations are applied, run thus in Gaelic:-

Piobaireachd Dhonuil Dhuidh, piobaireachd Dhonuil;
Piobaireachd Dhonuil Dhuidh, piobaireachd Dhonuil;
Piobaireachd Dhonuil Dhuidh, piobaireachd Dhonuil;
Piob agus bratach air faiche Inverlochi.
The pipe-summons of Donald the Black,
The pipe-summons of Donald the Black,
The war-pipe and the pennon are on the gathering-place
at Inverlochy.]

Pibroch of Donuil Dhu,
  Pibroch of Donuil,
Wake thy wild voice anew,
  Summon Clan Conuil.
Come away, come away,
  Hark to the summons!
Come in your war array,
  Gentles and commons.

Come from deep glen, and
  From mountain so rocky,
The war-pipe and pennon
  Are at Inverlochy.
Come every hill-plaid, and
  True heart that wears one,
Come every steel blade, and
  Strong hand that bears one.

Leave untended the herd,
  The flock without shelter;
Leave the corpse uninterr'd,
  The bride at the altar;
Leave the deer, leave the steer,
  Leave nets and barges:
Come with your fighting gear,
  Broadswords and targes.

Come as the winds come, when
  Forests are rended;
Come as the waves come, when
  Navies are stranded:
Faster come, faster come,
  Faster and faster,
Chief, vassal, page and groom,
  Tenant and master.

Fast they come, fast they come;
  See how they gather!
Wide waves the eagle plume,
  Blended with heather.
Cast your plaids, draw your blades,
  Forward each man set!
Pibroch of Donuil Dhu,
  Knell for the onset!

Footnotes:

{1} This eText comes from a book (Pike Country Ballads etc.) which contains a number of poems by John Hay. These have been released separately by Project Gutenberg under the title "Pike Country Ballads and Other Poems" by John Hay. They are not included here to avoid duplication.

{2}. The literal translation of Fuentes d’Honoro.